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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please add or amend the claims to read as follows, and cancel without prejudice or disclaimer to resubmission in a divisional or continuation application claims indicated as cancelled:

1. (Currently amended) A method for automatically acquiring ~~the~~ a persistent identity of ~~[[an]]~~ a user requesting service from a service provider, said method comprising: ~~said service provider sending an identification request including persistent and transient identity information, by the service provider~~ to a network access provider (NAP), said NAP comprising a NAP identification (ID) module and an access system in communication with said NAP identification module; ~~and said NAP ID module extracting persistent identity information associated with said user, verifying the network address transient identity information of said user and forwarding said information associated with said user to said service provider, by said NAP ID module; and forwarding said persistent and transient identity information to the service provider.~~

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of sending an identification (ID) request comprises sending the ID request via at least one identification switch.

3. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of extracting information comprises the steps of: verifying whether the ~~network address transient identity information~~ of the user is included in the ID request; and if the ~~network address transient identity information~~ of the user is not included, extracting the ~~network address transient identity information~~ when the user connects to the NAP.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 3, wherein said step of extracting information comprises the step of: retrieving data from a group of databases including an online session database in communication with said NAP and a user information database in communication with said NAP.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein said step of extracting the

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~~network address~~ transient identity information comprises the steps of: detecting a request from the user of a specific URL, said specific URL being identifiable by a plug-in installed in the proxy server of said NAP; and ~~said plug-in~~ reporting the real network address of the user, by said plug-in.

6. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein said step of extracting the ~~network address~~ transient identity information comprises the steps of: detecting a request from the user of a specific URL, said specific URL being identifiable by a network sniffer installed between the user and the proxy server of said NAP; and ~~said sniffer~~ reporting the real network address of the user, by said sniffer.

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein said step of extracting the ~~network address~~ transient identity information comprises at least one of the steps of: instructing the user to connect to the address extraction module of said NAP via an alternative service or port not associated with the proxy server; opening a direct connection to said address extraction module; and ~~by~~ automatically configuring the proxy settings.

8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of forwarding comprises the step of: reporting said persistent and transient identity information associated with said user to said service provider;

9. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of forwarding comprises the step of: verifying information items provided in the identification request; and forwards a match score describing the similarity between the information associated with said user and the information items provided in the identification request.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of forwarding comprises the step of: sending a virtual ID for said user to said service provider.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of forwarding comprises the step of: sending information associated with said user in a previous request to said service

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provider.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 2, further comprising the steps of: determining the identity of the NAP servicing said user; forwarding said identification request to said NAP identification module; determining whether said identification request includes the ~~network-address~~ transient identity information of said user; and if said identification request does not include the ~~network-address~~ transient identity information of said user, extracting the ~~network-address~~ transient identity information when the user connects to the NAP.

13. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein said step of determining the identity of the NAP comprises the steps of: maintaining a look-up table of ~~network-address~~ transient identity information associated with a plurality of NAPs; and determining the identity of the NAP by reference to said look-up table.

14. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein said look-up table is updated manually whenever ~~network-address~~ transient identity information assignments change.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 13, wherein said look-up table is updated automatically from said NAP identification module based on information reported from said access system.

16. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein said look-up table is constructed from existing ~~network-address~~ transient identity information assignment databases.

17. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically identifying ~~an~~ a user requesting service from a service provider, said method comprising: said service provider determining the veracity of the ~~network-address~~ transient identity data reported by the user; if said network address is determined to be trusted, said service provider including said ~~network-address~~

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transient identity data in an identification request and sending said identification request to a network access provider (NAP), said NAP comprising a NAP identification module; and providing service in accordance with said service request; or if the ~~network address~~ transient identity data is determined not to be trusted; said service provider sending an identification request to a network access provider (NAP) for ~~verifying the network address of~~ providing persistent identity data for said user; and forwarding said ~~information~~ persistent identity data associated with said user to said service provider.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 17, wherein said step of sending an identification (ID) request comprises sending the ID request via at least one identification switch.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 18, further comprising the steps of: determining the identity of the NAP servicing said user; forwarding said identification request to the NAP identification module associated with said identified NAP; determining whether said identification request includes the ~~network address~~ transient identity information of said user; and if said identification request does not include the ~~network address~~ transient identity information of said user, extracting the ~~network address~~ transient identity information when the user connects to the NAP.

20. (Original) The method according to claim 19, wherein said step of forwarding comprises the steps of: configuring at least one network appliance to route specific requests to a specified NAP; and the NAP identification module associated with said specified NAP identifying said user.

21. (Original) The method according to claim 20, wherein said at least one network appliance comprises one of a group including an HTTP proxy and a WAP Gateway.

22. (Currently Amended) A system for automatically acquiring the identity of the user of an anonymous network, said system comprising: a service provider in communication with said user; and at least one network access provider (NAP) in communication with said service

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provider and said user; said at least one NAP ~~comprising:~~ including a NAP identification module to provide persistent identity data: ~~comprising:~~ a controller; and an address extractor in communication with said controller, to enable extraction of transient identity data; and an access system in communication with said address extractor.

23. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 22, further comprising at least one online session database in communication with said controller and said access system, said at least one online session database containing at least information associating said user with the user's ~~network address~~ transient identity information.

24. (Original) The system according to claim 22, wherein said at least one NAP is in communication with said service provider via at least one identification switch.

25. (Original) The system according to claim 22, further comprising at least one user information database, in communication with said controller.

26. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 25, wherein said at least one user information database comprises at least one of a group of databases containing data including persistent personal details data related to said user, ~~billing information, information about past user logins, and a reverse telephone directory.~~

27. (New) The system according to claim 26, wherein said persistent personal data includes data relating to one or more fields selected from the group consisting of billing information, information about past user logins, and a reverse telephone directory.

28. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein said identification request includes data from one or more persistent identity elements not typically available online.